appreciating the materiality of creation and an awareness of responsibility towards it. We have to do justice to the way God created things in a material way, including humans and their sexuality. Also we have to do justice to the imperfection of reality since we have fallen into sin. A strive for perfect ‘purity’ and total control will harm rather than do good.

In the concluding chapter, Brock ties together the various elements of his book. A quote that I very much appreciated is this: “That this is the case, that all human making, technological or otherwise, is a process of discovering what God gives to sustain creaturely lives, is a truth that humans must learn to confess from within a broken world”. The term ‘discover’ comes close to what reformational philosophy calls: disclosure. It is the opening of possibilities that God has laid in reality for us to work with. The brokenness of reality has not taken away that responsibility, but made it more difficult because both outside us, in the ‘thorns and thistles’ earth now produce, and inside us, in our sinful hearts, there are barriers to overcome in this activity of disclosure. This Christian approach to technological acting and thinking will not be applauded by many people nowadays. In politics, it seems much more attractive to stick with technology assessment methods and their suggested precision and control possibilities. Even among Christians it may well be a reason for disagreement. Yet, Brock urges us to promote an approach in which we seriously reckon with risk and vulnerability (page 387). Contentment, and not greed, should be our primary attitude to life. This goes against current mainstream thinking, but it is a necessary correction to our time, that Christians have to stand for in a firm manner. Brock’s book offers us very valuable reflections on this Christian ethics in an age in which technology becomes an instrument of utopian thinking.

Marc J. de Vries
Delft University of Technology, Netherlands
E-mail: m.j.devries@tudelft.nl


Jonathan Chaplin’s introduction to, and critical assessment of Herman Dooyeweerd’s social and political thought is a major achievement. Chaplin, who serves as the director of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics in Cambridge, England, has been engaged in the study of Dooyeweerd for many years, going back to his doctoral thesis at the London School of Economics. The quality of this volume shows his mastery of the subject.

Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), one of the founders of this journal, was professor of the philosophy of law at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for nearly 50 years, from the 1920s to the 1960s. Chaplin’s book begins both by locating Dooyeweerd in his own time and by showing the relevance of his philosophy of societal pluralism to the debates over “civil society” in our day. In conversation
with contemporary thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, Jose Casanova, Charles Taylor, and Michael Banner, and earlier thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Otto von Gierke, and Jacques Maritain, Chaplin works to show how Dooyeweerd’s philosophy illuminates three central problems in civil-society discourse today: 1) the definition and scope of the concept of civil society; 2) the relation between the state and civil society; and 3) the utility of civil society for social critique.

Given the wide range and complexity of Dooyeweerd’s thought, which Chaplin covers in detail, it is not possible to survey, much less evaluate, all that Chaplin has done. I will simply point out the progression of the book’s chapters and then pick up on three points of Chaplin’s criticism of Dooyeweerd.

Following the first chapter on contemporary civil-society debates, Chaplin introduces Dooyeweerd as follower of the neo-Calvinist reformer and founder of the Vrije Universiteit, Abraham Kuyper. Chaplin concludes the second chapter with an eight-page “guide” to what follows in chapters Three through Eleven. Chapter Three introduces Dooyeweerd’s cosmonic (cosmic law-order) idea of philosophy, its religious root, and its central ideas of meaning, time, and law. Chapter Four is a clear summary of Dooyeweerd’s theory of the modal diversity of the creation’s temporal order, the laws and norms of which hold for the institutions and organizations (among other things) that function in those modalities. Here Chaplin also explains Dooyeweerd’s idea of “individuality structures” — “the basis for the distinct identity of concrete phenomena,” including families, churches, and states. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the idea of the “enkaptic interlacement” of institutions and relationships in society.

Chapter Five opens the window on Dooyeweerd’s philosophy of cultural development and the historical process of societal differentiation and integration. That leads to the next chapter’s account of social pluralism where, among other things, Chaplin responds to the charge that Dooyeweerd is guilty of “essentialism” with his idea that “invariant structural principles” serve as the normative basis of human associations and institutions. Chaplin contends that Dooyeweerd’s “affirmation of multiple irreducible human functions and of the necessary structural forms required to channel them in ways conducive to communal human flourishing does not imply any essentialist straightjacketing of social structures.” Chapter Seven continues with an overview of Dooyeweerd’s categorization of different kinds of social entities and interrelationships and with a more detailed account of the enkaptic interlacement (or intertwinement) of institutions. This is also where Chaplin summarizes and applauds Dooyeweerd’s criticism of individualist and collectivist philosophies that ignore or try to abrogate the pluralist principle of societal “sphere sovereignty” (the irreducible identity and responsibility of different kinds of social entities).

In Chapter Eight Chaplin explains Dooyeweerd’s view of the state (the institutional political community of citizens and government), which has as its historical founding function the monopoly of coercive force over a defined territory. Chapter Nine then turns to the state’s juridical qualifying (or leading) function and explains the important connection between the state’s founding